

## Quantifying Violence Against Women in Trinidad and Tobago

### Objectives:

- To engage with grassroots agencies and public actors in Trinidad and Tobago to survey the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls with focus on interpersonal violence, unemployment, and homelessness
- Review previous and ongoing literature of the work previously conducted in this area to now to inform the survey's development
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### Community Engagement

- OABI (Organization for Abused and Battered Individuals)
- Womantra
- The Network of NGO's of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women
- Domestic Violence Survivors Reaching Out
- Fire Circle
- The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
- Faith Based Religious Organizations - Prominently
- Living Waters Community of Trinidad and Tobago
- The Gender and Child Affairs Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister
- The Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago
- Ministry of Social Development
- Spotlight Initiative CSNR-G

The aim of this study is to quantify the increasing interpersonal violence and housing insecurity of women and girls since the onset of COVID-19 in Trinidad and Tobago.

Since crime statistics do not properly reflect violence in Caribbean countries, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and Caribbean Community organizations decided to use the CARICOM model to assess the prevalence of violence against women. Two previous studies of qualitative and quantitative data were conducted. The qualitative study reflected conclusions in the quantitative study that 1 in 3 Trinidadian and Tobagonian women experience interpersonal violence (IPV) in their lifetime. Looking through an ecological model lens, causes for the increased risk for women and girls is understood at four societal levels: individual, relationship, community and societal. In summary, normalized physical violence in a male-dominated culture characterized by female objectification fosters an unsafe environment for its women.

This is a public concern as the consequences of this violence weaken the community, with negative impacts on physical and mental health, economic resiliency, school performance, and dropout rates. In places such as the home which are meant to be safe places, the community destabilizes as these women and girls fail to seek or receive the support they need.

This previous data collection explored the implications of economic security and found that poverty and economic dependence are key factors in IPV, so in the midst of the novel

COVID-19 pandemic, this economic downturn is an enormous increased risk to the safety for women. With the onset of the virus and stay at home orders, the family unit spent less time in school or at work to stay at home. For women and girls already in abusive households, exposure to family violence only increased with the pandemic.

It is hoped by the end of this study, the combined efforts will be able to develop a strategy for implementation of the national survey and further research on the experiences of Trinidad and Tobago women specific to COVID-19 effects. With the national survey, a quantitative study can be delivered to the national committee responsible for national COVID-19 recovery and be implemented into data-driven COVID-19 public policy for support for women and girls on the islands.